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CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE: LATIN VERSE

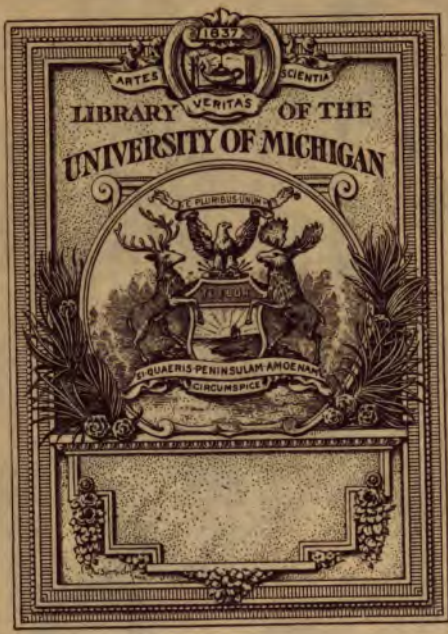
1906.

Poetae Lucani morientis oratio

BY

FRANCIS S. PORTER

SCHOLAR OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE.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Poetae Lucani morientis oratio

CARMEN LATINUM

PRAEMIO CANCELLARI DONATUM
ET
IN THEATRO SHELDONIANO RECITATUM
A.D. XII KAL. IUL. MDCCCCVI.

AUCTORE
FRANCISCUS S. PORTER
E MAGNA AULA UNIVERSITATIS

OXONII
B. H. BLACKWELL
MDCCCCVI.

SCIRE MORI SORS PRIMA VIRIS, SED
PROXIMA COGI.

POETAE LUCANI MORIENTIS ORATIO.

Atria longa tacent: tantum fons limpidus undis
murmurat egelidis lenique silentia lapsu
rumpit: agunt dubiam iam prima crepuscula noctem
transque pavimentum crescentes vesperis umbrae
sensim prorepunt; post summa cacumina Phoebus
imbuit illapsus pacis dulcedine caelum.
Omnia tranquillam cessant composta per urbem.
At procul in tecti penetralibus ipse domorum
tantarum dominus, sed mox cessurus ab illis,
leti aditum exspectat: multa fore manat in undas
sanguis, et invalido discurrit vita meatu.
Circumstant dominum, fidissima pectora, servi
exigui numero quos aut benefacta ligarant
aut amor. At reliquos fortuna instansque tyranni
terruerat rabies trepidosque exegerat aula:
hi remanent casumque animi miserantur iniquum.
Ille oculis proni pereuntia lumina solis
haurit et exsanguis dum sensim languor inertes

151039

artus attenuat, cum iam frigescere sensit
corporis extrema, hanc suffecit pectora pulsans
spiritus in vocem et moriens haec ultima dixit:
" Auctoris revocata sui sic carmina fato
conveniunt—' Ruptis sanguis cadit undique venis,
discursusque animae diversa in membra meantis
interceptus aquis; nullius vita perempti
est tanta dimissa via; pars ultima trunci
tradidit in letum vacuos vitalibus artus.
At tumidus qua pulmo iacet, qua viscera fervent
haeserunt ibi fata diu; luctataque multum
hac cum parte viri vix omnia membra tulerunt'[1]—
Quid me ploratis, servi? cur amplius aequo
fletibus indulgetis inaniter? haud opus illis
compositae speciem mentis turbare serenam
lamentis: fugite hinc, rerumque instante ruina
vos saltem servate fuga: nunc omnia plenis
membra fluunt venis: totum est pro vulnere corpus,
iamque ministeriis vestris nulloque cadaver
indiget obsequio; tantum praestate supremum
officium domino, corpusque exsangue sepulcro
condite. Cura mihi sola haec in morte, peremptum
ne liceat foedo corpus temerare tyranno.

[1] Phars. iii. 639. These lines are said to have been recited by Lucan while bleeding to death.

Ante velim flammis tradi malisque ferarum
membratim absumi, talis quam flebile monstri
ludibrium linqui vaesano et praeda furori.
Quo lacrimas leti? nec vos lugere decorum est
nec me Fortunae non responsare superbae.
Namque ego, qui cecini properati gaudia leti
primaque praecepi mortalis munera vitae
scire mori, quibus aspicio iam sensibus ipse
instantis faciem mortis? qua mente supremam
ordior ire viam? timor est, an grata voluntas?
degenerem patiar Lucanum dicere gentes,
fortibus et verbis non ipse interritus addam
fortem animum? Druidis, Arctoae vatibus orae,
credere vellem equidem tenebrosa negantibus umbras
quaerere regna, alio sed vivere rursus in orbe.
illis mors media est; regit idem spiritus artus
et ducenda iterum vitae subtemina Parcis.
Quodsi animae vivunt pereuntque cadavera solum
cedant terrores; mortis metus omnis abito.
Sin hominum nulli fatorum arcana movere
fas datur, ignarique ad mortem cogimur omnes
caelicolumque inopes factae ad ludibria pupae,
non locus ille metus; magis admiranda deum vis.
O bona Libertas, morientem hanc accipe vitam;
pro te pugnavit: tibi nunc se dedicat; at tu,

alma, fave: quos vis ventura in saecula sacras.
Certum erat ereptam patriae te, dulcis imago,
reddere: religio sed spem praepostera lusit,
Piso,[1] timorque tuus mensam foedare cruore
hospitis. Anne necem nunquam sancire tyranni
magnus amor patriae valet et placare deorum
numina? Fortunae cum pignora tanta dedisses,
denique in hoc illi nolebas credere, Piso?
Scandere rostra fori trepidosque ciere Quirites
et tantam populo spem commisisse timebas?
degeneres adeo visi, te iudice, cives?
singula quid memorem? tantorum causa malorum
Scaevinus trepidans et servi lingua dolosi.
occidit et Senecae pietas atque irritus ardor
Sulpicii, Proculusque et Scaurus ad omnia promptus,
audax interiit Flavus, periitque senator
Scaevinus, nec inornatam te voce silebo
virtutemque tuam, mulier,[2] mentemque capacem
secreti, indignumque fidem postponere vitae.
tormenti rigidas incorruptissima vires
sustinuit tandemque, sua ne tradere quenquam

[1] Tacitus, Annals XV., 52. "It was next proposed to strike the blow when the Emperor was at a private villa of Piso's: again Piso refuses to violate the laws of hospitality, a piece of sentiment which in such a matter can hardly command our respect." Merivale, ch. 53.

[2] Epicharis.

voce urgeretur sociorum invita, petivit
funibus adductis mortem, quis vincta sedebat.
permissum est monstrare tibi quid femina posset
durare, at Rufo probrum temptare supremum
quidque viro posset vitae suadere cupido
dedecus optanti pro vita turpe pacisci.
Urgebat poenas sociis: nil profuit ulli
pignus amicitiae: sed cunctis conscius index
principis exacuit nullo discrimine ferrum.
I nunc insidias pro libertate tyranno
instrue, tormentis ut spes inmota supremas
Libertina urbis tueatur, vernula prodat!

Fata manu invitare iuvat, studiosaque mortis
corda gero: neque enim producere longius aevum
fert animus nisi uti coepto finem addere possim.
nunc non finitis (quod quis lugere vetabit?)
carminibus, fatis divorum exclusus iniquis,
absisto vacuasque vocor volitare sub umbras.
Sic species tam clara ruit, sic denique cessat
Libertas experta feri depellere regni
servitium: in tenuis spes tanta evanuit auras
numinaque obsistunt et inexorabile fatum.
Vincis, inhumana maculosa libidine Pestis,
atque triumphata iam libertate superbis:
fortia tot damnare indigna pectora morte

quippe iuvat, gaudesque viam fecisse ruina
Bistoniique nefas foedum superare tyranni.
Imperium exercere putas imbellibus Indis
aut servire tibi Seras mollemve Sophenen?
Roma, placetne tuis talem penetralibus imis
inmisisse luem? regno semperne nefando
servitura graves patiere, miserrima, fastus?
usque adeone humili, tantum dominata per aevum,
manseris obsequio, virtutis et inmemor irae?
non ita; namque etsi multos Fortuna nocentes
servat et in seras gaudet differre ruinas
pone tamen sequitur: subita mox verbera dextra
incumbens miscebit atrox et crimina coget
pendere. Non dabitur demum tibi, pessime, fati
effugium: restant Furiaeque parataque poenis
agmina. Nam casus mens vaticinata futuros
alta petit, longique per avia temporis errans
cursibus extremis fatorum arcana resolvit.
Eumenidum torvas facies saevamque flagello
Tisiphonen video, villosaque colla colubris
Oedipodioneasque vices vetitisque hymenaeis
supplicium. Furias insons Pelopeus Orestes
fugit maternae sectantes crimina mortis:
ille quidem veniam nanctus culpamque piavit;
quippe auctore deo sceleratum attingere factum

ausus erat, matrique vices et debita fati
struxit: tu parili fatis reus, inprobe, noxa
sospes adhuc vadis sperasque inpune deorum
posse potestatem contemni arcanaque iura:
ergo inpune sacram maculabis sanguine Romam
nec solvent, scelerate, incesti debita tandem
concubitus caesique patres? Roma arserit igni?
Inpune immodicae, furiose, indulseris irae?
Quis credat regnare Iovem? quis supplice voto
numina digna? cavis elisi nubibus ignes
inmeritas feriunt quercus, culpaque vacantes
fluctibus in mediis naves ferus obruit Auster:
hic, superum spretor, sceleris vestigia servat
incolumis: quin iam peccandi peccat amore.
Mentimur curare deos mortalia: quodsi
vota valent hominumque advertere questibus aures
vos, superi, scitis, gemitus audite precesque,
oppressam spectate urbem, discatque tyrannus
esse deos et fata vices sumptura merentes.
Credis Oresteae nutare ultricia culpae
numina, nec capiti superimpendentia fata
respicis. Humanae debes ludibria genti
cui tota in vitio versetur vita. Tumultus
et coniuratas video in tua funera sicas
et proturbatum celsa de sede tyrannum.